

THE
abc
of
PUSHTI
MARGA

-: Inspired by :-

Shri Nikunjalata Betiji

-: Written by :-

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“Saanvri”

-: Published by :-

Shri Gusainji Charitable Trust

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**I Dedicate this work, every word & thought,
every expression of this work at the lotus feet
of Shri Krishna in his “Goverdhandharan” form.**

It is from Him that I draw my very breath.

It is he who is the reason

for my existence.

INTRODUCTION

The propagation of **Pushti Marga** and bringing it before the people in its correct perspective and all its glory has always been my endeavor. For this purpose I have always preferred to publish written material highlighting the various facets and aspects of this cult. We have earlier published various works like Jagatguru Shri Vallabhacaryaji, Prabhucharan Gusainji Shri Vitthalnathji, Shri Shrinathji etc. Now with great pride I give the Vaishnav world another prestigious work '**THE ABC OF PUSHTI MARGA**' by **Shrimati Neeta Mehta**. This book like the title suggests is truly representing the beginning or a sort of a first tiny step in understanding the very basic terms that are used on a day **Pushti Marga** to day basis amongst people belonging to **Pushti Marga**. More importantly this book is mainly for those who are newly introduced to **Pushti Marga** and for those who are below eighteen years of age and who are curious to understand it on its very base level, but I am also sure that anyone who reads this book will also find it useful and enlightening at some point of time.

The idea of this book was conceived by the author herself and I loved and accepted the entire concept and its newness at the very moment she shared it with me. The concept of giving brief and most convenient meanings of words used in **Pushti Marga** in English is novel and beautiful and I heartily congratulate her. I have always welcomed, enjoyed and appreciated all of **Neeta's** works with her knowledge, her faith in **Shri Vallabh** and His teachings. I have been witness to her progress as she has grown in this field. I have nurtured her and watched her as she has moved forward in her spiritual journey on the path of **Shri Vallabh**.

I also heartily bless and appreciate the co-operation and the support of **Shri Hitesh Ramesh Dharia (Shehrawala)** and his family for the publication of this work.

I sincerely hope that **Vaishnavas** will find this work very useful. and accept and appreciate it. It is their appreciation which gives me the reason to work relentlessly towards the propagation of **Pushti Marga**. This book is for the younger English speaking generation mainly and my faith in them as the future of **Pushti Marga** is tremendous. I therefore hope that this work finds its place in every Vaishnava household so that the foundation of **Pushti Marga** is firmly laid in the young minds through the understanding of it in the simplest way and also more and more people everywhere can understand the greatness of the cult that is given by **Shri Vallabh**.

Nikunjalata Betiji

PREFACE

It is with overwhelming pride that I present my fourth book **THE ABC OF PUSHTI MARGA** to the world. This book is not intended to be a dictionary or an encyclopedia of **Pushti Marga**, but a simple work defining, at the very basic level the terms used in the day to day routine in every Vaishnav household.

It is indeed sad to know that our present generation is not aware of a lot of things related to **Pushti Marga**, though in their early age they might have been inculcated into this cult by family traditions or sheer force of their parents. It is with this generation in mind that I present this work, which answers their basic questions and prepares a ground work in their minds regarding the sublimity and greatness of this cult.

This book at its simplest level defines outwardly the basics of some common terms; volumes can be compiled in the detailing of this cult but I have kept aside these details to avoid lengthy descriptions of a highly detailed scriptural way of devotion. Through this book I have just wished to introduce Pushti Marga and so have named it '**The ABC of Pushti Marga**' instead of 'the **A to Z of Pushti Marga**'.

My sincerest thanks and grateful acknowledgements to **H.H. Goswami 108 Shri Nikunjata Betiji (Shri Jiji)** who is my guru and mentor and who has always inspired me to create literature in this field and again giving me this opportunity to present a work that can prove to be useful to the younger generation. Her blessings are the biggest assets of my life.

I sincerely hope that this book is accepted and read in every **Vaishnav** home. I wish all my readers **JAI SHRI KRISHNA**.

NEETA MEHTA
'Saanvri'

29th December 2010

Shri Gusainji Pradurbhav Mahotsav



SHRI BALKRISHNALALJI

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OUR OTHER TITLES :-

- 1) JAGADGURU SHRI VALLABHACHARYAJI.**
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- 3) PRABHUCHARAN SHRI VITTHALNATHJI - SHRI GUSAINJI.**
- 4) SHRI SHRI NATHJI.**
- 5) THUS YOU PRAY.**

A

ATMA NIVEDAN

The letter A is the inception of the alphabet and at the very inception of Pushti Marga we have Atma Nivedan. Atma Nivedan mostly implies surrender of the self or of the soul. At the very foundation in Pushti Marga we are made aware of the fact that we have to surrender everything material and spiritual at the feet of Shri Krishna and on this foundation, we build a strong edifice of devotion as propagated by Shri Vallabh in Pushti Marga.

In its very broad perspective, Atma Nivedan means selfless surrender of everything material and spiritual within this world and the next at the feet of the Lord, accepting Him to be our Lord and Master to the exclusion of all others. On such a strong foundation can one's devotion rise, ultimately resulting in the attainment of the divine experiences of the Supreme. According to the Nine Fold Path of devotion as shown in the scriptures, Atma Nivedan is the ultimate or the ninth step on the ladder of devotion, but for the followers of Pushti Marga, Atma Nivedan is the beginning. It is shown as the first step of devotion without which it is not possible to progress towards God.

ASHTAKSHAR

This is the eight syllabled Mantra or the Sharan Mantra that has been adopted into Pushti Marga (along with Panchakshar) as the Mantra to be chanted by its followers. This Mantra 'SHRI KRISHNA SHARNAM MAMAH' invokes in a person a deep sense of belonging to Shri Krishna, Shri Vallabh in the Navratna Stotra has instructed us to chant this Mantra at all times with every breath a person takes.

The Mantra essentially means O Krishna you and you alone are my refuge - I surrender myself totally unto You. No constraints, and no conditions are laid down for chanting this Mantra. In fact this is one Mantra which can be chanted incessantly, every moment, everywhere, anywhere under any circumstances, making it easier for a person to follow it and thus be in a constant state of Krishna consciousness. It acts as a constant reminder to one of one's surrender at the feet of the Lord.

ASHTACHHAP

Ashta chhap are the eight poet musicians in the temple of Shri Nathji - His most ardent devotees, all of them blessed by His immense grace and love. When Shri Vitthalnathji (ShriGusainji) organized the Raaga Bhoga and the Shringar of ShriNathji temple for the purpose of the seva, He kept in mind ShriNathji's love for music and organized and invited the eight poet musicians to sing and compose lyrics according to the various moods of Shrinathji from dawn to night.

These were poets, dedicated devotees who loved Him and whose devotion and love were reciprocated by divine visions and experiences of His divine pastimes. Four of them - Surdasji, Kumbhandasji, Parmananddasji, and Krishnadasji were the followers of ShriVallabh, while the other four - Nanddasji, Chaturbhujdasji, Govinddasji, and Chhitswamiji were the followers of Shri Vitthalnathji.

They were great devotees, but were also composers, singers and musicians beyond compare, who, out of their sheer adoration for Shri Nathji gave mellifluous renderings of compositions in every Raaga. Their works are the most magnificent poetry of Indian literature and remain unique to this day.

B

BRAHMASAMBANDH

The Vedas refer Shri Krishna as Brahma. We all know him as God or Bhagvan Parabrahma Parmatma all pervasive, omnipresent, power-the force and cause behind the existence of this universe. Shri Vallabhacharyaji through Brahmasambandh establishes our relation with Shri Krishna the Brahma. Brahmasambandh therefore means a relationship with God. Shri Vallabh in this unique concept asks us to first establish a relationship or a connection with God, initiating us into Pushti Marga after which the journey towards Him actually begins.

Brahmasambandh is therefore a vow taken before Shri Krishna through Shri Vallabh and His descendants, to surrender oneself at His feet and remain His humble servant and devotee. It is a vow of Dasoham - I am your humble servant - after which he worships Shri Krishna through seva performed with love, faith and devotion. With Brahmasambandh, a pair of Tulsi kanthi or mala is worn in the neck representing one's relation with the Lord at all times. Through Brahmasambandh a person becomes Vaishnav and is inculcated into Pushti Marga.

Shrimad BHAGVAT and Shrimad Bhagvad GITA

The most important of all Vedic scriptures in the present times, Shri Vallabh has adopted these two scriptures as the basis of Pushti Marga along with the Vedas and the Brahmasutras. The Gita - the song of Shri Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra is a treatise on spirituality and

methods of attaining the Supreme, teaching the philosophy of Karma (action), Bhakti(devotion), and Jnana(knowledge). In its eighteen chapters, lies the secret of life and the gist of the entire philosophy of Hinduism, giving outstanding instructions and explicit suggestions to live a peaceful life. It is positive in approach and subtle in its preachings, gradually helping one to walk the path of spirituality.

Shrimad Bhagvat on the other hand, gives personified examples of that philosophy, connecting the philosophy of the Gita to the person living it. The basics of the entire cult of Pushti Marga is found in its tenth Canto, where the simple selfless love of the Vrajvasis for Shri Krishna is shown as the embodiment of the highest principles of devotional love, making it the greatest treatise of devotion. It can easily be called the Gospel of love. Shri Vallabh has interpreted the Bhagvat in seven different ways, the essence of which lies in His work Shri Subodhini. It is also the Namatmak swarup (the name form) of ShriNathji and therefore occupies a place of very high reverence for every Vaishnav.

Shri BALKRISHNALALJI

Amongst all of Shri Krishna's names this name is perhaps the most widely used. The name itself is very endearing and shows the easy rapport one can share with the Lord, for Balkrishna means Shri Krishna in His infancy. Crawling in the house of Nandji in Gokul. This is the commonest form that is worshipped through seva by followers of Pushti Marga.

BHOGA

It is a term used for the offerings during the Seva. The term in its broadest sense means offerings in the form of food. Bhog is one of the three important aspects of seva, the other two being Raaga and Shringar. It is superbly classified and well defined according to the time and seasons and has been organized by Shri Vitthalesh in such a way so as to suit the constitution of a child. The daily routine consists of Ashtabhoga or eight meals or Bhoga. Its grandeur and its variety accounts for the fact, that the best of everything should only be offered to the Lord. However mere offering of the most expensive things would be meaningless if it is offered without love and devotion.

C

CHARAN

The Charnarvind or the lotus feet of the Lord are the refuge and the final resort of millions of His devotees. It is here that the devotion begins in the form of self surrender, when Tulsi leaves are offered after the Brahmasambandh Mantra has been pronounced. They are the focus of meditation of all yogis and mystics, worshipped by Goddess Lakshmi all the time, and coveted by celestial gods like Shiv and Brahmaa , they are the refuge of all the devotees who wish to attain His experience.

They have sixteen divine symbols which show the ultimate fruit of their worship that result in the progress of His devotees.

MATSYA (the fish). GOPAD (the hoof of the cow). TIKON (a triangle). KALASH (the auspicious pot). DHANUSH (the bow). ARDHA CHANDRA (the crescent moon). AKASH (sky or space). KAMAL (the lotus). ASHTAKON (octagon). ANKUSH (the trident). DHWAJA (banner or flag). JAMUN (black berry). VAJRA (a divine weapon). URDHWA REKHA (vertical line). SWASTIK (a type of an auspicious cross) and finally JAV (freshly harvested grain).

Together these symbols are the signs of upliftment and protection of the devotee as he emerges himself more and more into the devotion of the Lord. The feet are the fate and destiny of one whose surrender unto the Lord is total and steadfast.

COW

A COW is an integral part of the Hindu culture, sacred and therefore worshipped by every Hindu. It is a common belief that all the celestial gods reside within the cow making it a representative of everything holy.

For a lover and worshipper of Shri Krishna, a cow does not just mean a sacred animal, but represents devotion, surrender and the ultimate quest of the Lord. It is dear to every Vaishnav because it is very dear to Shri Krishna, who was Himself born in Gokul as a cowherd. Shri Krishna indulges in Gauchaaran (taking His cows to graze in the pastures in and around Vrindavan) in His early childhood, clearly showing His love and adoration for them. This is one of His exquisite divine Leelas and even the celestial gods have coveted the darshan of the Lord in His 'Gopal' form.

The cows of Gokul are a perfect example of surrender and devotion. When Shri Krishna plays His flute they shun every activity including grazing and just listen to its melodious notes enraptured, absorbing the form of the Lord into themselves through their eyes. This level of devotion within a mute animal gives it a highest place of reverence in the heart of a Vaishnav. There have been examples of the Lord Himself favouring a devotee who tends and looks after His cows.

D

DHARMA

It is the most commonly used term in our daily usage, perhaps the most mind boggling and misunderstood. It is highly confused with religious rituals. It is very difficult to put down the exact definition of Dharma, as it is the most subjective term we ever know and varies from person to person throughout the world. Different cultures and different religions see Dharma in different ways. Shri Krishna in the Gita describes Dharma as one's duty or Karma according to one's position and station in life. This definition covers a wide gamut of duties - personally, socially, humanly and spiritually.

For a follower of Pushti Marga, Shri Vallabh has defined Dharma in a unique way. He says that, for a person who has surrendered Himself to Shri Krishna through Brahmasambandh the only Dharma is to perform the seva of the Lord at all times (Sarvada, sarvabhaven bhajniyo Vrajadheep) and He does not recommend any other duty for a vaishnav. This is because after Brahmasambandh when a person pledges 'Dasoham' (I am your servant), he automatically vows to serve his eternal master and therefore making seva his primary duty or Dharma.

DASYA BHAKTI

DASYA or the sentiment or 'bhaav' of a servant towards his master is one of the steps of the nine fold path of devotion, an important psychological aspect of devotion. It helps cultivate modesty in a person and subdues the ego in him, helping him progress on the path of spirituality.

In Pushti Marga way of devotion Dasya plays a very important role. At the very outset, with Brahmasambandh, Dasya is pledged and a person thereafter sees himself as a humble servant of Shri Krishna, forever ready to serve the Master and submerges his will totally into the will of his Lord. Dasya is therefore the first important sentiment of Pushti way of devotion.

DINTA

It is modesty in its widest perspective, a direct result of the Dasya bhaav arising in a person's heart. It is awakened when the Dasya in a person is steadfast and the person is totally without the 'I'ness and 'My'ness arising due to the material wants and possessions in his life. Dinta according to Shri Vallabh is the most valued virtue in a Vaishnav and is firmly rooted in the fact that Shri Krishna is my Lord and His wish is for me to follow as everything and everyone I have, belongs to Him. This sort of modesty in a person makes a Vaishnav more humane in every way and eases his ascent towards God.

DHWAJAJI

Seven in number, the Dhvajaji or the Banners on the ShriNathji temple are the pride of every Vaishnav heart. They are the representative of Shri Nathji Himself. They are the pride of Pushti Marga, showing the decorum and dignity of a mode of devotion which is uniquely different

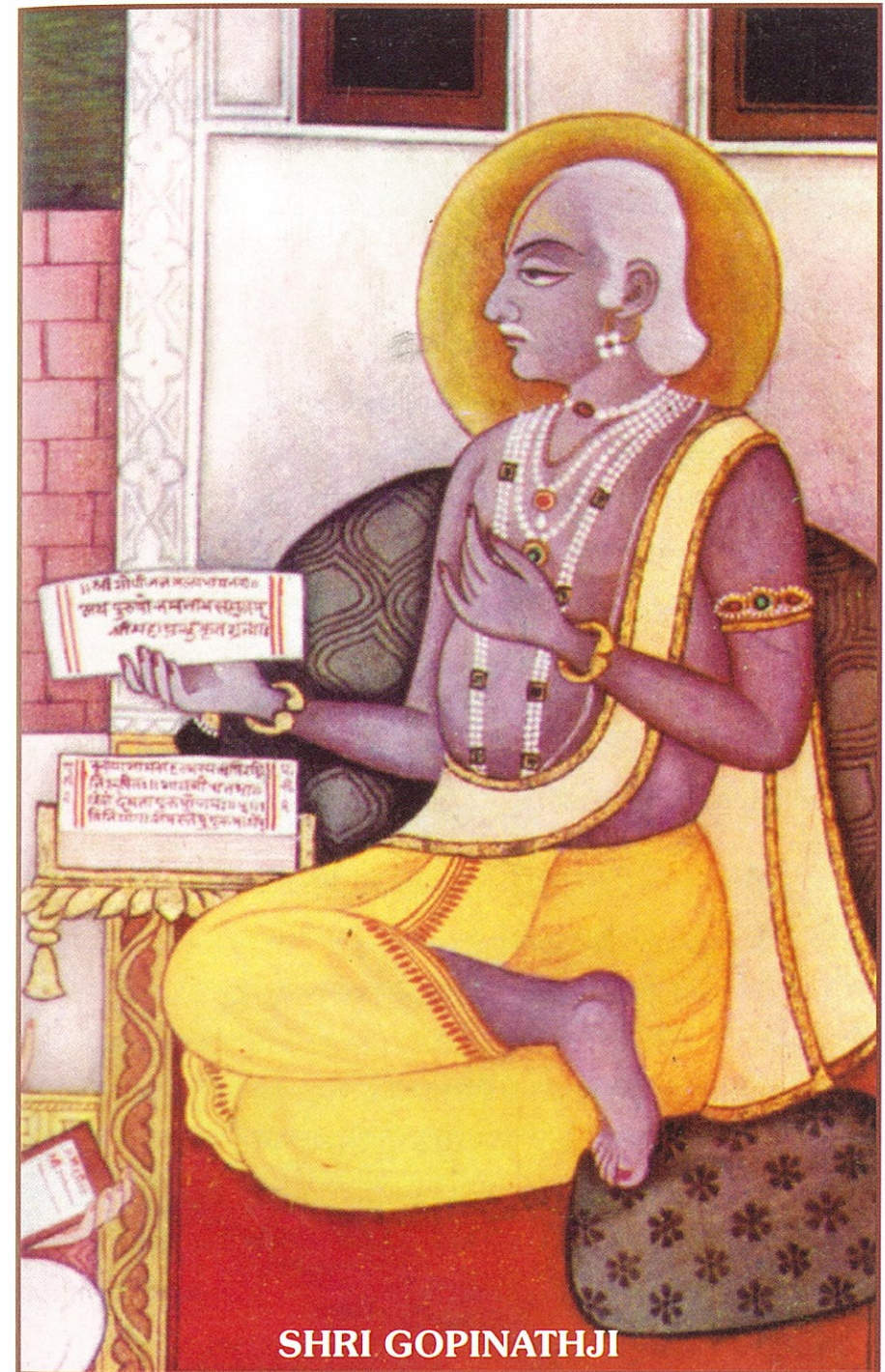
from all others. They are revered and worshipped by all followers of Pushti Marga and has the same status , being the Form of Shri Nathji which travels to different places while the Lord Himself is established at one place.

DAIVIJEEV

It is the most widely used term in Pushti Marga and literally means a divine or an uplifted soul. Pushti Marga has been devised as a path of devotion for a chosen few. Shri Vallabh has classified the Daivijeev as the one who is spiritually a part of the divine Leelas of Shri Krishna and whose mission in life is to attain the same position through devotion. This mission in life is expressed in the Brahmasambandh Mantra, when a person states his position that, being away from the Lord since thousands of years, he is now suffering from the sorrow of separation from Him and wants to reach Him. This is a pure soul, very spiritually inclined, who ultimately succeeds in experiencing Shri Krishna by His grace. It is a soul exceptionally blessed and readily accepted by Shri Vallabh, whose chief mission on earth was to choose and meet these pure souls and lead them back towards the Lord through Pushti Bhakti. He toured the country thrice for this purpose and met these people, guiding them gently, blessing them by His grace, led them towards their goal.

DWARKADHEESH

This is one of the many favourite names of Shri Krishna. Dwarkadheesh literally means the King of Dwarka and is a magnificent four-handed form of the Lord.



SHRI GOPINATHJI

G

Shri GOVARDHANNATHJI

Shri Govardhannathji is the full name of ShriNathji and the presiding deity of Pushti Marga, whose darshan we obtain in Nathdwara the small town near Udaipur in Rajasthan. It is the form of the seven year old Shri Krishna who lifted the Govardhan mountain on the little finger of His left hand, to protect the people of Vraj from the wrath of Indra the god of heaven. The form is sensuously beautiful and magnificent and attracts thousands of devotees. The seva routine given by Shri Vallabh to His followers is performed towards ShriNathji or any other childhood form of Shri Krishna. The principle forms or the Nidhi Swarup in Pushti Marga are all the various forms of Shri Govardhannathji, who is the ultimate refuge of His devotees.

The names Govind, Gopal, Gokulnath, Gopinath etc are the other predominant names He is known by, representing His different Leelas and ShriNathji is addressed by all these names by His devotees.

Shri GOPIJAN

The Gopis of Vraj - the local cowherd girls - they are the epitome of the highest level of devotional love. Their love for Shri Krishna is unparalleled to this day - and Shri Vallabh therefore calls them the 'Gurus' of Pushti Marga. He says that the love the Gopis possessed for Shri Krishna should be the ideal of every Vaishnav devotee, its selflessness and the exclusivity being the hallmark of their love. Shri Vallabh expects this kind of love of the Gopis as shown in the tenth Canto of Shrimad Bhagvat, from His followers and this is the highest goal set for every Krishna devotee.

GURU

In its widest sense Guru means a teacher, but 'guru' is no ordinary teacher. Guru is that person who uplifts and enlightens our lives, leading us on a humane path of spirituality. He is that spiritual guide, who nurtures in our heart the love of God and cultivates a disregard for all things material. He awakens our spirit and lifts our life from the mundane to the sublime and the divine. In Pushti Marga Shri Vallabh is our eternal Guru and His descendants till the present day are His representatives. Through them we revere our eternal Guru.

Shri GOPINATHJI

Shri Gopinathji was the elder son of Shri Vallabh, who carried the flame of Pushti Marga from his father after He left for His divine abode. He managed and administered the affairs of ShriNathji temple efficiently till his younger brother 'gusainji' Shri Vittahalnathji grew up.

GOKUL

This small town of Vrajbhoomi is a place where Shri Krishna spent His early childhood. It is in Gokul in Nandalaya (Shri Nandji's house) that we find the infant Shri Krishna, crawling, taking His first early steps, enticing and alluring everyone with His divine childlike Leelas and gracing the Vrajwasis with His love. Gokul therefore becomes a very important place of visit for all Krishna devotees and there is an overwhelming awareness of His presence in this town.

H

Shri HARI

Shri Krishna is often referred to by this name. Hari means someone who takes away. Shri Krishna is known to take away the troubles and the unhappiness of His devotees and by His grace bestows on them bliss and happiness' thus helping them develop deeper devotion and love for Him.

Shri HARIDASVARYA (Shri Giriraj)

This is the name by which Shri Girirajji (the Giriraj or the Govardhan mountain) is known. The term is made up of three smaller terms - Hari , Das and Varya. Together they mean the foremost and the greatest servant and devotee of Hari . Shri Giriraj is worshipped as one of the five elemental forms of Shri Krishna the other four being ShriNathji, Shri Yamunaji, Shri Vallabhacharyaji and Shri Vitthalnathji. His presence in Pushti Marga is two fold - as Bhagvad swarup - the form of Shri Krishna Himself and the other as Bhagvadiya Swarup - the faithful devotee of the Lord. He is Bhagvad Swarup because when Shri Krishna performed the Govardhan Puja, He manifested as Shri Giriraj and accepted the offerings, showing us that Shri giriraj is the same element as Himself. As a Bhagvadiya or a devotee, He serves the Lord in various ways by preparing and maintaining the ambience that is convenient and comfortable for the performance of His leelas

Thus in both the ways Shri Giriraj is worshipped and revered by His devotees.

I

INDRAMANBHANG

A very important aspect of the GOVARDHAN LEELA of ShriNathji Shri Krishna, it means subduing the ego of the celestial god Indra. Shri Krishna had prevented the sacrifice (yagna) offered to Indra every year by the people of Vraj and propagated the worship of Shri Giriraj as the Supreme and eternal Lord. Indra was furious and descended upon Vraj with all his destructive forces, deciding to completely destroy it. For seven days there was deluge and destruction, as Indra in all his rage was determined to destroy every Vrajwasi. The innocent people of Vraj, as always, looked upon Shri Krishna as their refuge and protector and Shri Krishna, the eternal refuge of those who surrender to Him, lifted the Govardhan Hill like an umbrella and saved them from the havoc wreaked by Indra. After seven long days, Indra, realizing his mistake and accepting his defeat, came to His feet; his ego subdued completely, prayed to the Lord for forgiveness. Shri Krishna being ever gracious and compassionate forgave him. This subduing of Indra's ego and false pride is Indramanbhang Leela of Shri Krishna.

INDRADAMAN

ShriNathji first appeared in the caverns of Shri Giriraj, He introduced Himself as Devdaman, Indradaman, and Naagdaman - the Lord and protector of Vraj. Indradaman is the name of Shri Krishna as He subdued the pride and ego of Indra during the Goverdhan Leela.

J

JHARIJI

Jhariji is the most commonly used term in the seva. It is a pitcher of water with a spout kept in front of the Lord. It is a sort of dispenser of water which is used all the time to serve water during the Seva. It holds a sentiment of Shri Yamunaji. It is assumed that the water filled in the Jhari has the presence of Shri Yamunaji as she is ever present with her Lord in this form. Along with Jhari, we have the Bantaa which is a small round box containing some Bhog (some assortment of sweet or dryfruit) kept near the Lord. The Jhari and the Bantaa are both essential even at night near His bed for His convenience and comfort.

JAPA

Japa is a very important means of attaining spirituality according to the Vedic scriptures. It means chanting of a Mantra or a name of the deity that appeals the most to us in life, establishing cosmic vibrations between the person chanting it and the form of God towards whom it is chanted. Japa can be performed on the rosary (a string of tulsi beads), within one's mind, silently without saying it aloud. It helps a person realize his spiritual self by concentration and helps in meditation on the form of God that one wants to please. It is the most subtle and silent way of devotion and through its power of consistency elevates a person to the highest level of sublimation, eventually resulting in visions or experiences of God. Japa is therefore considered a very important part of spiritualism.

Shri JAGANNATHJI

Lord Jagannath is the form of Shri Krishna which is present in the temple of Puri in the state of Orissa on the Eastern coast of India. It is one of the four seats of Vedic cult in India. Here Shri Krishna appears before His devotees along with His elder brother Balaram and His sister Subhadra.

JATIPURA

Jatipura in Vraj is a small village on the foothills of the Giriraj hills. It is the Mukharvind or the face of Shri Giriraj and is worshipped by thousands of His devotee who bathe Him with milk. It is the starting point of the Parikrama or the circumambulation performed by thousands of people.

JANMASHTAMI

Janmashtami is the eight day of the dark half of the month of Shravan and being the birthday of Shri Krishna is the most important day of celebration for Vaishnavas all over the world. Janmashtami and the next day Nandmahotsav are therefore celebrated with great revelry and joy and are celebrations spreading bliss and happiness amongst all of Krishna devotees

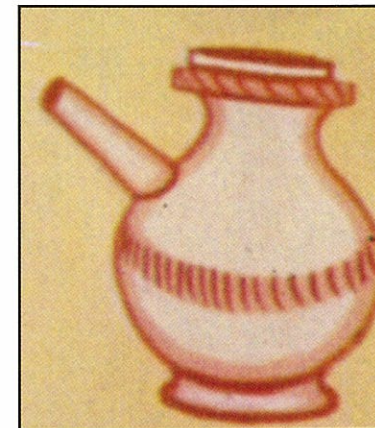
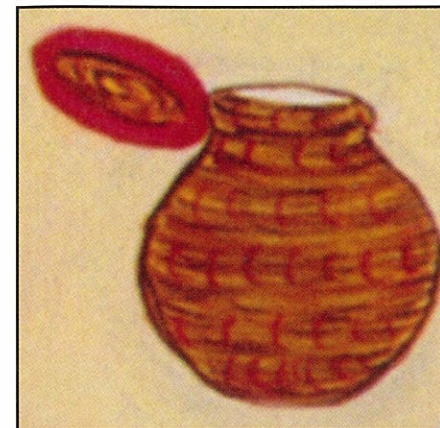
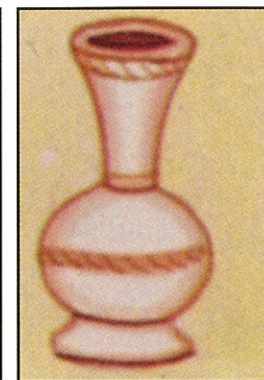
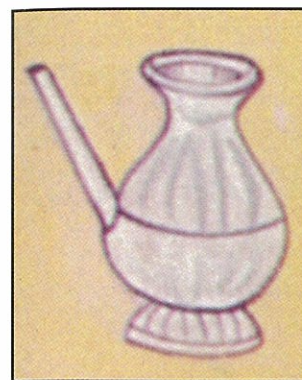
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Shri KRISHNA

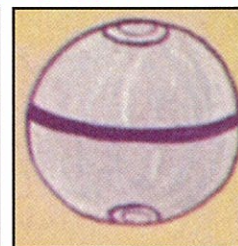
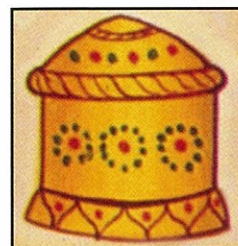
Krishna is singularly the most important aspect of Pushti Marga. Why just Pushti Marga? Krishna is the most important aspect of this entire Cosmic creation. The causes of all causes, He is the sole reason behind the creation of the universe. Krishna is Sacchidanand Brahma, Nirguna, Nirakaar - the Supreme God power described in the Vedas and every religious scripture that followed after that. The ultimate power behind all powers, Shri Krishna alone is the Poorna Purushottam that has been meditated upon by mystics thousands of years down the line.

It is impossible to define and describe Krishna completely by a mere mortal, Krishna is best understood when experienced, for nothing and no one in the world can summarise Krishna in words. For the followers of Pushti Marga, Krishna is the only God to be worshipped, as Shri Vallabh does not recognize any one or any power that comes closer to Krishna, leave aside being equivalent or greater than Him.

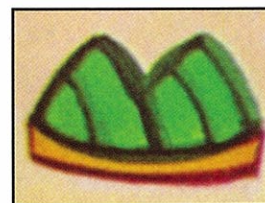
Krishna is Anand or bliss personified and often incarnates on the earth to protect and nurture His devotees and bless and love them with His grace. The child Krishna of Sarasvat Kalpa is the subject of love and devotion of all Vaishnavas. Keshav, Kanhaiya, etc. are all the various names given to Him according to the various Leelas He has performed during His childhood. He is the central figure of Pushti Marga. It is this Krishna, the all pervading at whose feet we surrender through Brahmasambandh and worship through seva as our Lord and protector. It is the seva of the young Krishna, the son of Yashoda and Nand which is



VARIOUS TYPES OF JHARIJI



BANTA



PAAN BEEDA (BEETEL LEAVES)



AARTI

SHRI GIRIRAJJI





the primary duty of every Vaishnava. It is Krishna in His Govardhandharan form (ShriNathji) who is the presiding deity and the centre of focus on the path of devotion as propagated by Shri Vallabh.

KIRTAN

Kirtan is the second step described in the Nine-fold path of devotion. Kirtan means to sing aloud the praises of the Lord. Kirtan in Pushti Marga are essentially small lyrics or poetry praising and describing the lord's form, beauty, leelas, attributes and grace. Kirtan plays a very important role in Pushti Marga because Shri Krishna is Stuti Priya -one who likes to hear his own praises and also a great lover of music. Therefore, kirtan is also a very important aspect of seva itself.

L

LEELA

LEELA is the most commonly used term in scriptural language. Leela in its simplest term means any action, activity, or pastime of God. When a human engages in some activity it is known as work, karma, kriya etc. but, when the Supreme engages in any activity it is said to be performing Leelas. The term Leela therefore has a divine connotation to it.

LAALAN

The tiny form of Shri Balkrishna or the infant Krishna is commonly known as Laalan. This is the most common form worshipped through seva in Vaishnav homes. Shri Vallabh has advocated the seva of this form because it is easier to worship and easier to please a child who is uncomplicated and simple. Also a small child awakens love within one's heart very easily and therefore devotion towards it comes very naturally and effortlessly. The sentiment of Yashoda is predominant in the seva of Pushti Marga, making this tiny form of the Lord the central focus in one's life.

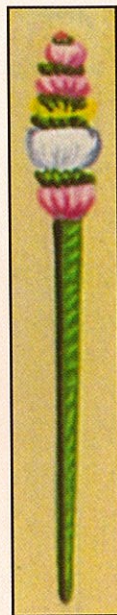
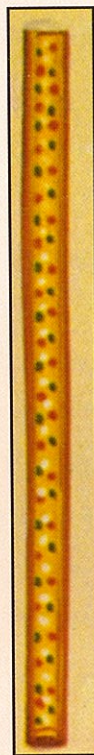
M

MAYA

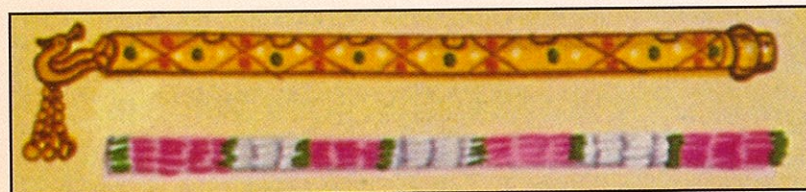
Seers, mystics and philosophers of Hinduism have described and defined Maya in their own different way. This term is perhaps the most baffling and puzzling term that one may ever have come across and perhaps been a subject of intellectual thought from centuries. Maya is broadly explained as illusion, a sort of a mirage. It can be best explained as "to negate the truth simply because it cannot be seen and to accept the untrue as truth just because it can be seen. Scriptures describe Maya as an important aspect of the Cosmic creation of God, intended to hide His real self from His own creation. Seers have therefore described Maya in their own way, each giving their own views vis-à-vis their own experiences as they tread upon the spiritual path in their lives.

Maya is therefore subjective and to know its real meaning one has to delve deeper into the personal experiences of one's own life. Philosophers like Shankaracharya propound the theory of Mayavaad stating only God is truth but His creation the Jagat is an illusion.

Shri Vallabhacharyaji totally negates this theory and in His philosophy of Shuddadvait Brahmavaad says that Brahma or God is truth and his cosmic creation the Jagat is also truth. This is because jagat has been created by Him out of His own Self. The illusion lies within the mind which, conditioned by the 'I'ness (ahamta) and 'My'ness (mamta) which it feels for his material possessions. This theory is the underlying idea of Pushti Marga.



Chhadi - Vetra
used by Shri Krishna When he goes for Gaucharan



Venu Murli The Flute

MURLI

The divine flute is Shri Krishna's favourite possession. His constant companion the flute is symbolic of Shri Krishna Himself. Melodious, mellifluous and magnetic, the flute is instrumental in attracting the devotees of every calibre to Him. Forever held in His hands, when playing on His lips, the flute symbolises the grace and the attraction of Shri Krishna when He intends to grace His devotees.

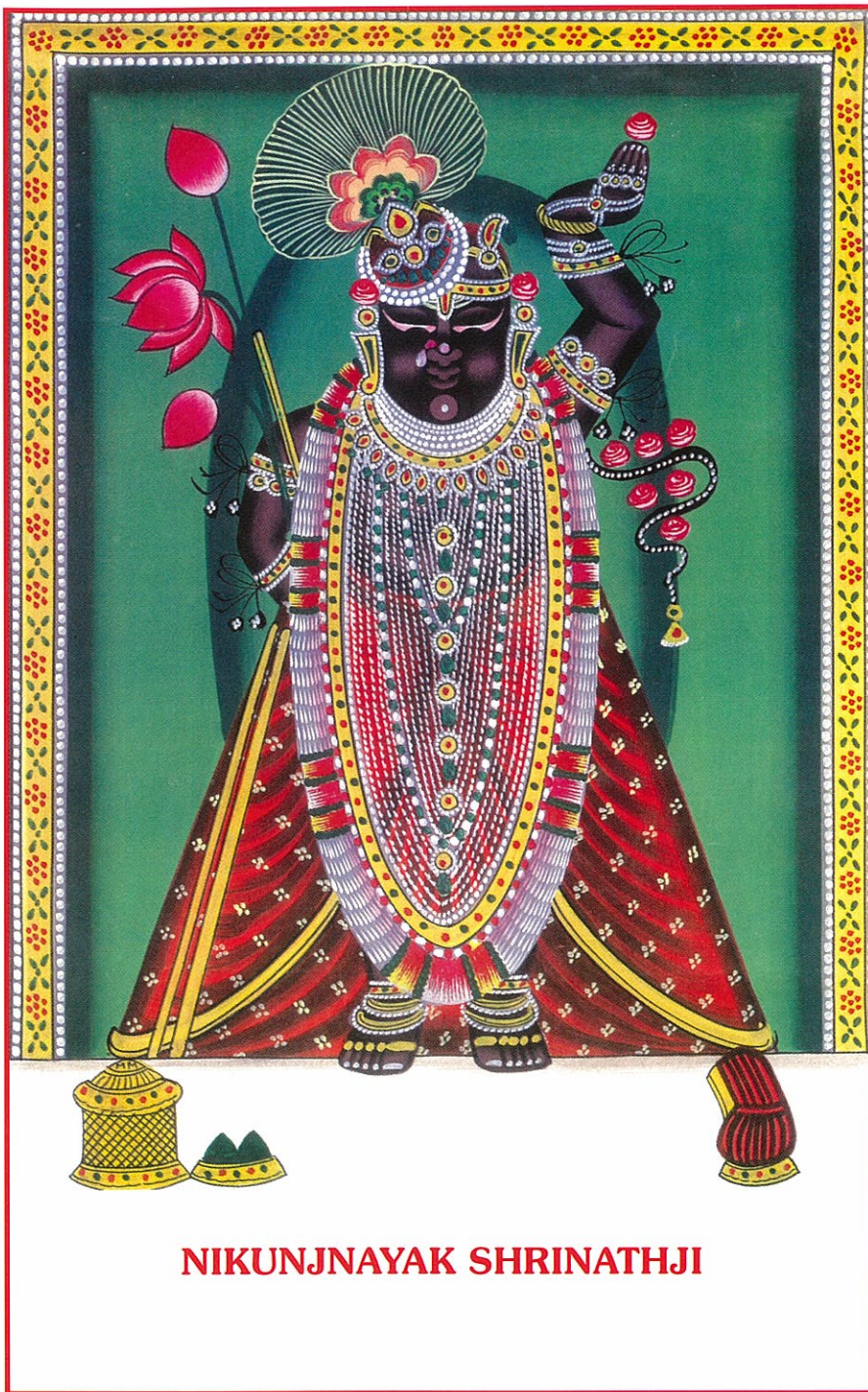
Madanmohan, Murlidhar etc are the various names of Shri Krishna as He plays the flute to attract His devotees.

MATHURA

It is the ancient city in north India, which is considered to be the birth place of Shri Krishna. Situated on the banks of river Yamuna, Mathura is an ancient city steeped in ancient Indian culture. Today it is the starting point of the Vraj Parikrama and is visited by thousands of devotees from all over the world.

Shri MATHURANATHJI

Is one of the many names of Shri Krishna, performing one of His divine leelas. It is a beautiful four handed form worshipped in Pushti Marga.



N

NIKUNJNAYAK

This is one of the many names of Shrinathji according to His leelas. Shrinathji, with one hand raised and the other one on His waist is standing at the entrance of the Nikunj (a small alcove in the wilderness of Vrindavan) of Shri Radhikaji. As the name suggests, the form is that of Shri Krishna involved in one of His romantic leelas, expressing His eternal love for His beloved Radha.

Shri NAVNITPRIYAJI

This is a very enticing and lovely form of Shrinathji. It is a very tiny form of a six months old Krishna crawling in Nandalaya, a loam of butter in one hand, innocence personified. As this form, it is a representation of the divine aspect of Shri Krishna who loves butter the most, and is forever moving around Yashodaji, pleading her to give Him more and more of the same.

NATHDWARA

small town in the Sinhad district near Udaipur in Rajasthan, Nathdwara is very important to every Vaishnav. It is here that we get the darshan of Shrinathji in the present times. In the eighteenth century when He chose to shift His residence from Vraj, He selected this small town because of His promise to Ajab Kunvar. As an ardent devotee of Shrinathji, she had obtained this promise from Him, that He would one day come and live in her house forever as she could not bear being separated from Him. It was to grace her and keep His promise to her that He travelled to Mewad and settled here. A temple was built for Him and the town that we see today is built around that temple.

P

PUSHTI

Shri Vallabhacharyaji founded a new cult, in devotional worship, based on the grace and the will of God. He called it Pushti Marga. Pushti Marga means the path of the grace of God. Pushti means to grace, to nurture and to vitalise. Here the seed of love and devotion in a person's heart is nurtured and vitalised by the grace of God, who then, by His will shares Himself and His visions and experiences with His Chosen One.

This mood of expansive compassion of Shri Krishna is Pushti. The fruits and the ultimate goal of devotion are not therefore attained by a person's own efforts but by His will and grace.

It is this mood of Shri Krishna which becomes a promise to a person to go ahead on this path of devotion.

PANCHAKSHAR

The last five syllables (panch+akshar) of the Gadya Mantra (the Prosaic Mantra) given at the time of Brahmasambandh is known as the Panchakshar Mantra. It is summarised to mean "Krishna I Am Yours". Shri Vallabh advocates this Mantra to be included in the japa routine of every Vaishnav just like Ashtakshar, but where Ashtakshar can be chanted at any time, at any place, the Panchakshar has to be chanted following certain discipline and rules of time and place. Both the Mantras are the only Mantras which are to be followed in Pushti Marga and both are chanted towards Shri Krishna.

PURUSHOTTAM

Purushottam is the term used to address God. It is the representation of one of His many attributes. Broadly the term means 'the best amongst men'. God (Shri Krishna) has more than once manifested Himself in the human form and as a man He has always been unparalleled, unequal and the one without the second. He is the best amongst the greatest and this aspect is highlighted in the Gita.

In Pushti Marga Shri Krishna is the Poorna Purushottam, the one whose grace and powers are absolute and beyond any questions. He is the master of His own will and out of His sheer grace sometimes even submits to the will of His devotee. Shri Vallabh refers to Him as Pushti Purushottam, the all powerful and gracious, who readily bestows His grace on those who live for Him and love Him. He is the eternal guide and protector of all those who have surrendered themselves at His feet.

POORNANAND, PARMANAND

These are again the many names of Shri Krishna which are according to His divine attributes, showing Him to be absolute and complete Bliss. Since Shri Krishna is Anand or Bliss personified these names suggest the absoluteness of this aspect. Shri Krishna blesses and graces His devotees with the experience of Himself in this blissful form.

R

Shri RADHIKAJI

Radhika or Shri Radha is the eternal consort of Shri Krishna. His complete other half, the Bliss of His life. Manifested from the form of Shri Krishna Himself, they are one entity with two names and two forms, two inseparable names synonymous with each other. Radha and Krishna - eternal lovers - symbolizing the word love itself. Theirs is the perfect love - existing for each other, within each other. It is impossible to conceive the existence of one without the other.

Shri Radha has manifested from the form of Shri Krishna Himself for the sake of performing His divine leelas, by which He bestows His Bliss all around. If Shri Krishna is the giver of bliss to His devotees, Shri Radha is the giver of bliss to Shri Krishna Himself.

RAAS

Amongst all of Shri Krishna's divine Leelas, Raas is the highest, the purest and the most sublime. It represents the union of the pure soul (the Atma) with God (Paramatma), the supersoul. It is also the most difficult to understand and therefore the most widely misunderstood in a world where people fail to understand the concept of such a spiritual union. The entire union is represented by a divine dance by Shri Krishna with the Gopis of Vrindavan. The leela is ultimately and uniquely divine as its concept is sensuous and sublime. It is something that is beyond the vistas of reason and intellect and above comprehension of the human mind.

RAASESHWAR

Raaseshwar, Raasvihari etc are the names of Shri Krishna as He performs the divine Raas. Here He is the sensuous God surrounded by His consorts and devotees sharing His bliss and His ultimate experience as the highest reward to their most selfless surrender.

RAAGA

Shri Vitthalnathji, knowing ShriNathji to be a lover of dance and music inculcated Raaga into the seva routine, making it one of the three main aspects of seva in Pushti Marga. Raag means melodious rendering of lyrics in the classical mode of Indian music. The lyrical poetry is sung before the Lord praising His beauteous form, His attributes, His leelas and His name. With the inclusion of Ashtachhap poets in the temple, Raaga was promoted and propagated by Shri Vitthalesh, who was Himself hailed as 'Geet Sangeet Sagar' by His followers. Today this aspect of seva, with a fantastic treasure trove of magnificent lyrics is the kind of worship unique to Pushti Marga only.

RAMANRETI

An important place in Vraj, Ramanreti near Gokul is unique and beautiful. It is believed that Shri Krishna has frolicked here and moved barefooted in the silk like soft sand and is one of those unique relics of the ancient age in the modern world. Devotees roll in this place with the belief in the existence of the vibrations and the touch of Shri Krishna Himself. This is a perfect example of the faith and devotion felt for the phenomena that is Krishna.

S

SEVA

This is the form of worship professed by Shri Vallabh in Pushti marga. After surrender through Brahmasambandh, a person pledges before the Lord to be His servant (Dasoham) and then renders seva unto Him. Shri Vallabh has established Seva as a means to express the love and devotion one feels for the Lord. Seva in short means service, and cultivates the feeling of modesty in a person while subduing his pride and ego. It is also a very important way of cultivating one's detachment towards material possessions. Through seva a person develops devotion consciously and subconsciously.

Shri Vallabh classifies seva in three ways: 1. Tanuja (manually) 2. Vittaja (financially) 3. Manasi (subconsciously). The first two being the basic initial level of seva and the third being the ultimate experience of God, rising from the subconscious and going to the levels of super-consciousness, when a person is so God conscious that nothing or nobody matters to him after that. That is the ultimate target Shri Vallabh has set for His followers - where the highest experience of bliss is attained by him.

SATSANG

A very powerful mode of taking one step ahead on the path of devotion is Satsang. The term implies a company of like minded people gathering to study, talk, discuss and engage themselves in activities that revolve around God. It can also mean discourses, discussions and kirtan sessions or merely reading of scriptures and the literature connected to God. Satsang like seva is therefore a means to constantly remind one of his connection with God.

SMARAN

Smaran is an important step on the nine fold path of devotion. Smaran means to remember. Smaran can be done in many ways for on the path of devotion one has to remember God every moment. It can be done through Japa, through Kirtan, through Katha (hearing or reading of scriptures like Shrimad Bhagvat etc.) In plain terms it means to remember God in every possible way to the exclusion of everything else. We may go anywhere, do anything, our conscious and our subconscious thoughts should be attached to Him alone. This is the best way to move a step closer to God.

SAMARPAN

Samarpan is the highest feeling of love, the most important aspect of devotion. Samarpan is to surrender - mind, body and soul to someone you love the most. Samarpan is the foundation on which the edifice of Pushti Marga is built. Samarpan is done through Atma Nivedan as shown earlier and Brahmasambandh is the process through which it is pledged at the feet of the Lord. Shri Krishna is then accepted as one's Lord and one then lives keeping in mind that whatever one possesses belongs to the Lord, and everything has to be offered to Him before taking it for his own personal use. With this comes a state of non-attachment towards material possessions, and a never ending faith in God is greatly developed.

SHRINGAAR

When Shri Gusainji encoded the seva of ShriNathji, He divided it into three sections - Raaga, Bhoga and Shringaar. Shringaar includes adornment, and dressing up etc. In this respect, daily Shringaar of the Lord is done as the daily routine of the seva. This is also classified according to the seasons, time and the festivals. The Shringaar prescribed in Pushti Marga are by itself a fine art, the aesthetics and the magnificence of which are incomparable anywhere in the world. From the surrounding paraphernalia or the "saaj" to the wearing apparel and the jewellery, the different headgears, the flower garlands etc; all have to be seen to understand and know its aesthetics. It enhances the beauty of the Lord who is already very sensuously attractive.

Offering the Shringaar, during the seva helps one to concentrate more and more on the form of the Lord and tends to keep one deeply involved and engaged there and one may even tend to forget the existence of the world outside, making it a very important facet of seva in Pushti marga.

T

TANU NAVATVA

Tanu Navatva is a concept unique to Pushti Marga. In the hymn 'Yamunashtakam' Shri Vallabh has shown the various attributes of Shri Yamunaji as the giver of various divine attributes to Her devotees to help them progress on the path of devotion and one of them is the attainment of Tanu Navatva. Literally speaking the term would mean a new body, but what is implied by Shri Vallabh is a body with vitality and power fit to perform seva and remain engaged in devotional activities irrespective of any age.

Tanu Navatva would therefore mean that by the grace of Shri Yamunaji a person becomes pure in body, able and actively vigorous so that he can be constantly be engaged in his devotional activities. This is unique because elsewhere we hear about a new body in some celestial abodes after birth, whereas Pushti Marga talks about a body with new, somewhat divine powers in the present birth itself. This is the highest level of grace rewarded to a devotee and a follower of Pushti Marga.

TAT SUKHITVA

Tat sukhitva is the most selfless feeling arising out of one's love for another. To do something that makes the beloved happy and comfortable even at the cost of one's own convenience and comfort is the feeling of 'Tat Sukhitva, it is a feeling which arises only when there is deep and selfless love. Shri Vallabh propagates this selfless feeling to be at the centre of one's devotion and therefore the seva that we perform has to be performed with this predominant feeling. To perform the seva of the Lord with this feeling according to Shri Vallabh is the real seva and the real way of devotion in Pushti Marga.

TILAK

Tilak is a symbol made on the forehead by a Vaishnava when he surrenders at the feet of Shri Krishna through Brahma Sambandh. It symbolizes the Lotus feet of the Lord.

TULSI

Tulsi is regarded as the most sacred and divine of all plants and has a special reverence in Hindu Vedic religion. No offering to Shri Krishna is ever complete without placing Tulsi leaves on it. Even while surrendering oneself through Brahma Sambandh, Tulsi leaves are offered at the feet of the Lord and then to complete the inculcation the Guru ties Tulsi mala or "kanthi" around his neck which symbolizes that he has been accepted as a Vaishnava and is qualified to perform the Seva of the Lord as shown by Shri Vallabh. Japa is also offered on the rosary or 'mala' made out of Tulsi beads.

U

UTSAV

Utsav is a festival and its celebration. Every festival involves its own mood and revelry in its celebration. Pushti Purushottam Shri Krishna is often known to be Utsav Priya or the one who loves the various festivals that come all year round. Joyous occasions like Holi, Diwali, Janmashtami and many others are celebrated throughout the year, with great cheer and fanfare. The joy, the revelry and the magnificence that match them are shared equally between the Lord and His devotees. The frenzy of the activities and the mood of the fast paced schedules add to the devotional sentiment as the crescendo of these celebrations rises by the minute.

The list of festivals celebrated in Pushti Marga is long as every little occasion becomes an Utsav, creating an opportunity to the Lord and His devotees to revel in its joy and magnificence, making "utsav" a very commonly used term in seva.

V

Shri VALLABHACHARYAJI

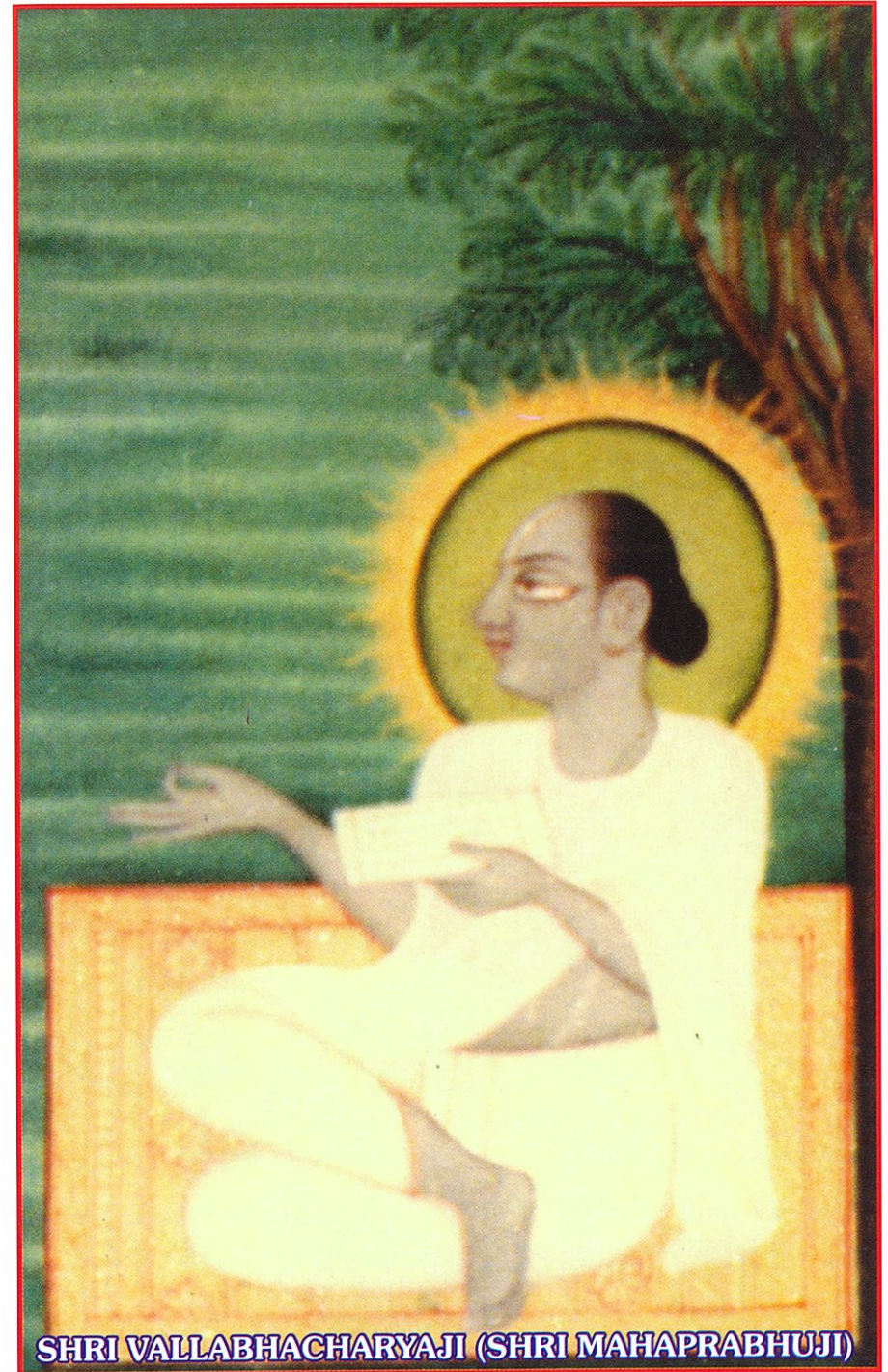
Shri Vallabhacharyaji Shri Mahaprabhuji is the founder and propagator of Pushti Marga. He is our eternal Guru, who manifested on the earth for a divine mission, to bring back God's chosen ones to Him through devotion. He was a profound scholar, well versed in every aspect of Hinduism and by His astute understanding and interpretation of scriptural texts, propounded the philosophy of Shuddhadvait Brahmapada.

He toured the country thrice accepting followers from every strata of society and turning them towards God, taught them the Pushti marga way of devotion. One of the other missions of His life was the perfect interpretation of Shrimad Bhagvat, which He interpreted in seven different ways and wrote beautiful commentaries on it in Shri Subodhini.

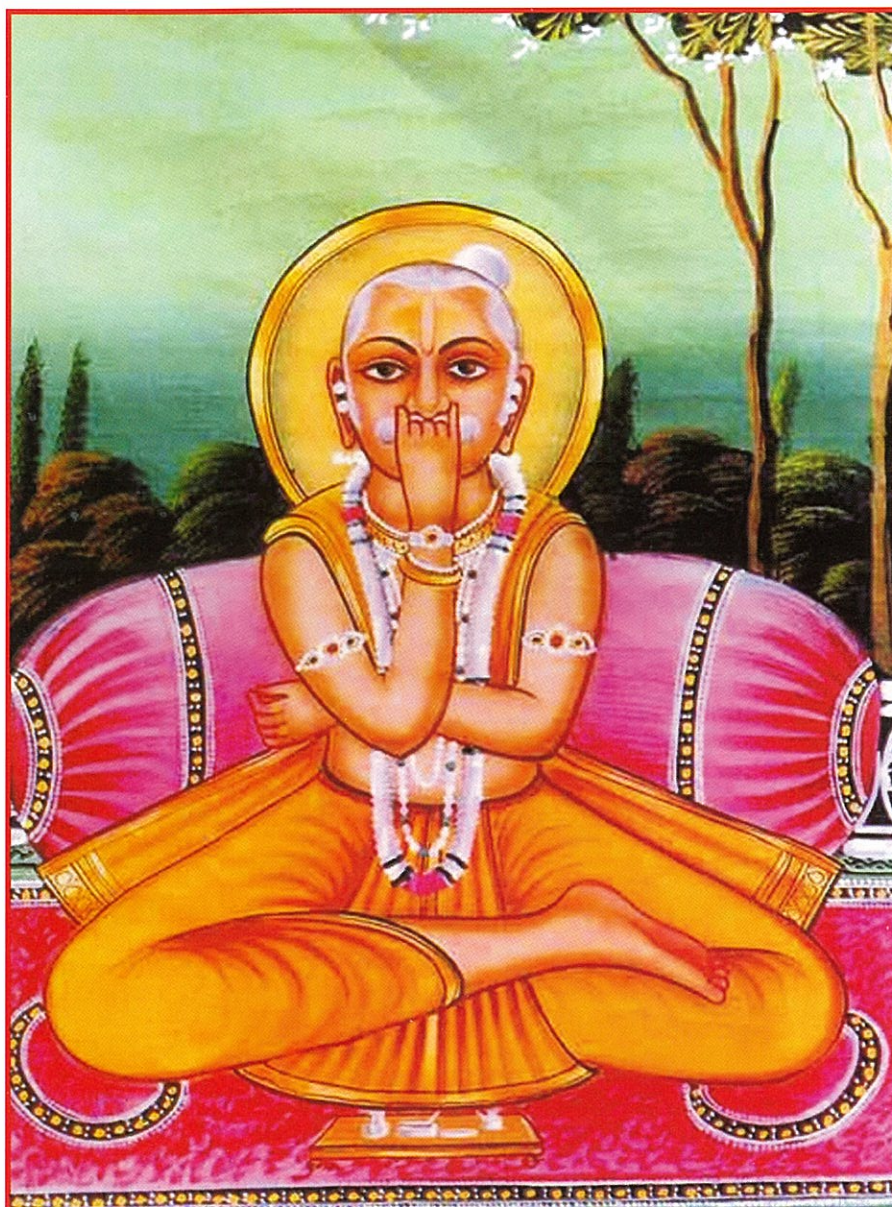
Shri Vallabh established Pushti Marga which is a unique and a different form of the love type devotion. He established Shri Krishna in His ShriNathji form as the chief deity around which the entire cult of seva is built. When ShriNathji chose to appear from the caverns of Shri Giriraj, Shri Vallabh seated Him in a small temple atop the Hills and started the basic seva routine which became the example for His followers in this cult.

Shri Vallabh has given Hinduism a great treasure trove of literature based on His intellectual interpretation of its ancient texts. As a Guru He is unparalleled - ever gracious, sympathetic always with great love for His followers, He led them, nurtured them towards the highest achievements of devotion.

He was divinity and grace personified, besides, History rates Him as one of the five main Acharyas of Hinduism. Shri Gusainji, in His hymn 'Sarvottam Stotra' has dealt in detail with every aspect of His personality and life.



SHRI VALLABHACHARYAJI (SHRI MAHAPRABHUJI)



SHRI VITHANATHJI (SHRI GUSAINJI)

Shri VITTHALNATHJI - Shri GUSAINJI

Shri Vitthalnathji the second son of Shri Vallabhacharyaji was an able and deserving heir to His father's legacy and heritage. He gave Pushti Marga its glory and magnificence it truly deserves. He took the seva of ShriNathji to its great pinnacles and set the standards of devotional routine which can be appreciated and understood by people who believe and understand Pushti marga. The classification of seva into three facets - Raaga, Bhoga and Shringaar - its opulence and its splendour - are all the legacies of Shri Vitthalesh.

A great scholar, an astute thinker, a loving Krishna devotee, Shri Vitthalesh was a compassionate Guru, embodying everything His father had propagated in Pushti marga. His literary legacy is no less than that of His father. He was also a very expert horse rider and a very skilled player of the Beena. He was an able administrator and a wise judge. Emperor Akbar often relied on His judgement and opinion in complicated judicial cases.

He was given many names by His followers and like Shri Vallabh He toured the country many times, accepting followers from every class of society and gracing them. The modern day Pushti marga owes a lot of its glory to Him.

VRAJ

Vraj or Vrajbhoomi is the area around the present city of Mathura in North India. It is an approximate area of 250 kilometres, with the river Yamuna flowing through it. Along with the Yamuna the other predominant feature of the area is the Giriraj Hills. This is the divine land

of Shri Krishna who resides here eternally. This is the land where Shri Krishna spent His childhood in the residence of Nand and Yashoda, His parents.

Here He has played, frolicked and performed divine leelas and graced His devotees. It is the most sacred of all places for Krishna devotees who make it a point to visit it at least in their life. The area consists of smaller towns and villages all associated with some or the other divine leelas of the Lord. It is picturesque and beautiful in its flora and fauna, and the many wildernesses, the ponds, the caverns of the Giriraj Hills and the banks of the Yamuna provide a glimpse of the ambience it had created to aid the divine leelas of the Lord. Even today, it makes the presence of the Lord felt very strongly and accounts for the faith and reverence it draws in the present times.

VRINDAVAN

Also known as Brindaban, Vrindavan is the Raas Bhoomi or the place where Shri Krishna performed the divine Raas. The place originally was a vast wilderness with exquisite flora and fauna to facilitate the divine romance between the eternal couple Radha and Krishna. Today it is a place where mystics and devotees come in quest of a glimpse or an experience of Krishna, many have settled here out of that one desire that some day in life they would be graced by the Lord and achieve the rewards of their devotion.



y

Shri YAMUNAJI

Shri Yamunaji is the fourth eternal consort of Shri Krishna, the only female form worshipped in Pushti Marga. However, she is worshipped as the form of Shri Krishna Himself. Shri Vallabh does not propagate the worship of any other form or deity except for Shri Krishna. Shri Yamunaji is the personification of grace and compassion that flowed from the heart of Shri Krishna and therefore worshipped as the form of Shri Krishna Himself. She resides in Vraj Bhoomi eternally, with her Lord and graces us in the form of a river and so is greatly revered by all His devotees.

In the hymn 'Shri Yamunashtakam' Shri Vallabh has paid glowing tributes to Her, praising Her form, Her grace, Her leelas and Her name and taught us why the grace of Shri Yamunaji is so important for every follower of Pushti marga. He propagates that this grace is the quickest way by which one can attain true devotion towards Shri Krishna.

